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natural and necessary. Only morons and cripples remain single. Though it is rare for people to renounce their home and property in old age, old men and women excessively attached to material goods come in for a good deal of criticism, and people often remark about them, 'Will they carry their wealth with them to the other world when they die?' It is at this time that their thoughts turn more to religion and to the destiny of their souls in the future life, and it is now that they generally undertake pilgrimages to holy places. In a sense the broad essentials of the philosophy of the *ashramas* can be said to permeate the life and thought of the Hindu villagers. The village Muslims share these social attitudes with their Hindu neighbours. With conversion to Islam they have changed their religious faith, but in the socio-cultural spheres of life they still continue to have more or less the same basic attitudes as the Hindus. In their family ethics and ideals the two groups demonstrate considerable similarity.

To the village people the necessity of both marriage and family is self-evident. It is necessary that the family line should be continued. A male heir must be left. An unmarried person past the marriage age is an object of pity. A couple without a son are unhappy. Childlessness and inability to produce a male child on the part of a woman often lead to a polygynous household. Marriage is regarded as essential among all the castes and social groups in the village. In a community of 2,494 persons, demographic survey reveals the presence of only two single persons—both women. One of these is a deaf-mute; the other has been a victim of epileptic fits from her childhood and has in addition the unenviable reputation of being a thief. For the clean-caste Hindus the continuity of the family line is necessary for a further reason. A male child must make a ceremonial offering of water to the spirits of his deceased parents and ancestors, without which their souls may not have peace. The untouchable castes as well as the semi-tribal groups also have this ritual in a modified form. The Muslims neither have this belief nor any attendant ritual, but they too share with the Hindus the sentiment against childlessness.

1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

The patrilineal and patrilocal elementary or joint family is the normal type of family unit met with in this part of rural India.

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593 565 837 [586] to maintain silence about them. But if affairs cross the limits of decency, or the constant misbehaviour of the wife threatens to become the subject of public gossip, the wife receives very harsh treatment and may even be driven out of the house. If she once leaves the house, readmittance for her would be practically impossible among the people of the upper level. On the other two levels, while tempers are roused very quickly and are even expressed publicly in a violent way, the reconciliation is not difficult. Faults of the wife are often openly discussed among them, and she is ridiculed in the presence of others; but she is quite readily forgiven also, and if she does not go astray again, she soon regains her former position in the household.

593 The stereotyped attitudes of wives for husbands and of husbands for wives are common for the community—as a whole. 'A woman should not be trusted. You can never tell when and how she would slip out', say the men in a knowing manner. Others add, 'Much depends on the husband. He must control his wife properly. Once he relaxes his control, then she is practically gone for all times.' The women, on the other hand, regard all men as heartless. 'It is impossible to please a husband; to-day he likes a thing very much; to-morrow he will lose his temper over it.' 'The lot of a woman is difficult. Unlucky ones receive beatings every day; the lucky ones get them only periodically. But is there a woman whose husband never beats her?' In a philosophical vein they add, 'And why not? The man works and earns. If we do not please him he beats us. Of what use are our protests? If a bullock runs away from one owner, will not its second master yoke it to a plough and mercilessly goad it to move faster? If we leave one man and go to another, what guarantee is there that he will not treat us in the same way?'

The wife does not dominate the domestic scene, but if she is tactful she can manipulate things in such a way that her husband will rarely go against her wishes. Gradually she comes to occupy a key position within the household.

● 581 Finally two significant questions may be raised: what type of wives do most men want? and what type of husbands do most women want? While the ideals and likes and dislikes of individuals are bound to differ greatly on the basis of their personal equations, certain attributes are considered desirable by people from nearly all the different levels of the community. A wife should be, above

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all, of a pleasant disposition, and should endeavour to keep her husband pleased. She must be 'tactful' and should be able to 'dissuade the husband from going the wrong way' without causing offence to him. This tact would be a valuable asset to her in organizing her general relations with the other members of the family. 'Foolish wives grumble and cry, and go on slaving for the household; the intelligent one wins over everyone by her pleasantness.' Then the wife must be a good housekeeper and a tolerable cook. Her economic virtues would ultimately earn for her the key position in the family. She must spend the money entrusted to her care very judiciously. She should save enough to buy her ornaments; and should lay aside something to meet unforeseen expenses. The more she can save without the knowledge of her husband, the more she will be appreciated by the elderly women. In sex she should not be passive, but should not be violently active either. 'We don't want a woman to be like a log of wood in the bed; but the aggressive ones definitely repel us', the men often remark. The women also comment on oversexed women who are shameless enough to cross the limits of womanly decency. Husbands do not want their wives to be fussy. The womenfolk seem to be well aware of this. In the words of one of our informants, 'If we nag too much, our words lose their value and our husbands make it a habit not to listen to whatever we say.'

Women's 'ideal' of a husband is a man who 'works hard and earns enough' to feed and keep the family in good clothes. If he can buy ornaments for the wife, he will be all the more admired. He should 'take an interest in his wife and children', and look to their comfort and welfare. While the women take it for granted that no husband is ever completely faithful to his wife, they resent their semi-permanent or permanent affiliations to a woman outside. They protest if his amours prove too expensive to the family. No woman would like her husband to earn the epithet of being 'a woman's slave', but neither do they want him to be overstrict and temperamental. The suggestion that a husband could be meek and docile appeared rather ridiculous to most women; what they seemed to like best was a firm, but friendly husband. A man not given to any excesses and possessing personality-traits which mark him out in the community in some way would certainly be an object of pride for his wife.